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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR S/CT (SHORE, SALAZAR) AND NCTC

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SUBJECT: THAILAND: 2005 COUNTRY REPORTS ON TERRORISM

REF: STATE 193439

GENERAL ASSESSMENT

1. (U) In 2005, Thailand continued to support domestic and international counterterrorism efforts. Thailand is a major beneficiary of US anti-terrorism assistance, with numerous Thai police and security officials participating in US-sponsored training courses.

2. (U) There were no acts of international terrorism in Thailand in 2005. Thailand's biggest domestic security challenge is the ongoing insurgency in the far southern part of the country. This region, bordering Malaysia, has experienced episodic separatist related violence for decades. Since January 2004, however, there has been a dramatic increase in the level of violence which has continued throughout 2005. Press reports indicate that over 1,000 persons have been killed either by militants or by security forces during this two-year period. Suspected separatist militants have attacked symbols of Thai and Buddhist authority, Buddhist civilians, and Muslims suspected of collaborating with the Government. There continue to be near daily incidents of violence.

3. (U) There are no indications that transnational terrorist groups are directly involved in the violence and there is no current evidence of direct operational links between southern Thai separatist groups and regional terror networks. Overall, the RTG maintains that the situation remains a domestic issue. However, elements of the Royal Thai Government (RTG) have expressed public concern that militants involved in the violence may have received funding and training from outside Thailand. Additionally, relations between Thailand and Malaysia have been strained as the violence continues in Thai territory near their common border. The ongoing unrest has drawn increasing international attention as well as the concern of international Islamic organizations. In March 2005, in response to the violence, the Indonesian-based Nahdlatul Ulama Islamic organization sent a delegation to Thailand, and in June 2005 the Organization of Islamic Conferences (OIC) sent a fact-finding delegation to study the underlying causes of the violence.

4. (U) Thailand's law enforcement and judicial system has struggled at times to combat the southern insurgency. Police forensics and ballistics work has often failed to produce evidence that leads to arrests following insurgent attacks and RTG prosecutors have struggled to develop cases that can stand up in court, leading to low public confidence in the authorities. In June 2005 four southern Thai Muslims, accused of having links with Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), were acquitted by a Bangkok court because of a lack of evidence. In February 2004, the RTG created the National Coordinating Center for Combating Terrorism and Transnational Crime (NCC-CTTC) in order to improve CT coordination between intelligence, police, and the military.

SANCTUARY ASSESSMENT

5. (U) During 2005 there was no direct evidence that Thailand served as a sanctuary/safe haven for terrorists or terrorist organizations. Thai security forces cooperate with the US and other countries to deny safe haven for terrorists within their territory. In the past, Thailand has served as a transit point for regional terrorists, as evidenced by the 2003 capture of Nurjaman Riduan bin Isomuddin (a.k.a. Hambali) in Thailand. However, there is no current evidence to indicate a continued presence of transnational terrorists in Thailand.

6. (U) Thai officials have expressed concern that transnational terror groups could establish links with southern Thailand-based separatist groups. However, there is no current evidence that the groups have established links or that Thai separatist are seeking direct assistance from international terror groups. The US and Thailand are cooperating to improve border security. As part of the USG's Terrorism Interdiction Program, we are providing Thailand with a customized border control computer network system known as PISCES (Personal Identification Secure Comparison

and Evaluation System). The program became operational at Thailand's three main international airports (Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Phuket) in September 2005. Installation at fifty-six additional border posts and crossing points is expected by the end of 2006.

INFORMATION ON TERRORIST GROUPS

17. (U) There is no current direct evidence that regional or transnational terror groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) or Al-Qaida are operating in Thailand. There remain in Thailand several Thai JI associates who have provided financial and logistics support to JI fugitive leaders and operatives. Since Hambali's capture in 2003, there has been no indication that these Thai nationals have any form of contact with JI. Thailand does not have any indigenous terrorist groups. However, there are several domestic militant separatist groups that have been implicated in the ongoing unrest in the far southern Muslim majority provinces of Narathiwat, Yala, and Pattani as well as several districts of Songkhla province. These organizations include the Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO), Barasi Revolusi Nasional (BRN) and Pattani Islamic Mujahideen Movement (GMIP).

18. (U) These separatist groups may share a basic ideology and general rejection of Western influence held by international Islamic terrorists, but by all indications they remained focused primarily on seeking autonomy or independence for the far southern provinces. During 2005, separatist militants conducted attacks that included coordinated bombing attacks using IEDs (usually triggered with a cell phone), shootings, and beheadings. There is no evidence that foreign governments provide financial, military, or diplomatic support for Thai separatist groups and no indication these groups would attempt an act of international terrorism.

FOREIGN GOVERNMENT COOPERATION

19. (U) The Thai government works closely with the US and other international partners on counterterrorism. The US and Thai militaries conduct a large number of joint exercises and training programs that support CT objectives. The US and Thailand are working on a joint effort to create a National Training Facility (NTF) that will provide field training for Thai military and police units involved in counter terror operations. We will also seek to increase our cooperation on Maritime Security and port security issues both in the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea. The State Department, under the Diplomatic Security Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) Program, continues to provide a robust training program for Thai CT and police units. Bangkok's International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) is a center for law enforcement skills training that is also useful to CT efforts. Under the auspices of the Container Security Initiative (CSI), we continue to work closely with the Thais on a range of port security programs. Thailand also works with international partners to eliminate financial support networks for terrorists.

110. (U) The RTG has been an active participant in international CT efforts, however, there are areas of concern. Thailand is currently party to only five of the 13 UN conventions and protocols relating to terrorism. The Thai government has given oral commitments to acceding to the remaining eight UN conventions and protocols. Thailand has not endorsed the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), a key objective given Thailand's regional leadership role and strategic location. Thailand also remains an international center for document fraud. The RTG has engaged with the G-8 Counterterrorism Action Group (CTAG) on increasing penalties for document fraud, but proposed legislation has yet to be passed.

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